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ABSTRACT

Five papers examine various facets of the new administrative structures of continuing education in England since 1970. Papers include: the chief administrative officer as college secretary (R.J. Stephens); the chief administrative officer and the academic board (A.M. Davis); the department head and the academic board (H.D. Law); decisionmaking and academic government (C.M. Turner); and academic government: some lessons from France (D.L. Parkes). (MSE)

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Coombe Lodge Report

Vol 7 No 12

Collection of Papers

College Government

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Collection of Papers

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FOREWORD

It is now some time since Circular 7/70 enjoined colleges of further education and polytechnics to introduce new forms of government. These five papers examine various facets of the new structure. Aspects of the role of the Chief Administrative Officer are considered by Mr Stephens and Mr Davis, while Dr Law takes the brief of reviewing the functions of the Head of Department. Mr Turner analyses the decision making functions of governing bodies and academic boards. Finally, Mr Parkes draws some comparisons between the government of colleges in this country and academic government in France.

R J Stephens,
Secretary,
Thames Polytechnic

THE CAO AS COLLEGE SECRETARY

The use of the term "Secretary" as used in the context of the title for this talk reflects

(a) a recognition of the parallel between the role of the CAO in the new college government structures and that of the Company Secretary in commerce and industry.

(b) an attempt to emphasise the professional status of the CAO by implicit reference to an established profession with its own Chartered body.

The Education (No. 2) Act 1968 can be seen as the "Companies Act" of public sector further and higher education and the Instrument and Articles of Government are to some extent the equivalent of the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

One essential difference must however be emphasised. Formation of a company gives a legal existence to that company, incorporation creates a "person" and the Acts are concerned with the obligations of that person particularly in relation to public disclosure of certain information. Conversely a maintained college has no separate legal existence, it takes its ultimate breath and being from the maintaining authority and its public accountability (or social responsiveness) is through the relationship with the authority.

The Secretary thus has a key role to play in the development and maintenance of that relationship. This is achieved formally through his clerkship of the governing body which is a responsibility distinct from his day-to-day responsibility to the Principal for the administration of the College. In the same way the Company Secretary is recognised as an officer of the company in the Acts and as such can personally be held legally liable for certain defaults from the Acts.

The important part which the Secretary has to play in maintaining the local authority relationship was given particular emphasis in the Weaver Report on Government of Colleges of Education. The relevant paragraph reads as follows:-

> "the man or woman who acts as clerk should be efficient and well-qualified and also be the kind of person who will be able to interpret sympathetically the needs of an academic community to the officers of the authority, work on friendly terms with both, and understand their ways."

The skill and sensitivity with which the person maintains the balance of this dual

loyalty is clearly of supreme importance given the possibility for conflict which undoubtedly exists.

The formal responsibilities of the Company Secretary may be summarised as follows:-

(1) The maintenance of the company's statutory records.
(2) The maintenance of financial records and their integration with the Annual Return.
(3) The preparation for and conduct of all meetings of the company.
(4) The custodianship of all the company's legal and formal documents and overall responsibility for legal advice to the company. (Custodianship includes preparation, execution and interpretation).
(5) The custody and use of the Common Seal.
(6) The custody of the directors' service contracts.

Nos. 1 - 4 have clear parallels in college administration. But there are three reasons why these parallels are now more relevant than ever:-

(1) The greater autonomy granted to the college.
(2) The increased internal democratization of the college.
(3) The accelerating trend towards greater formality in relationships with staff and students resulting in the need for more formal, legal or quasi-legal documents. In particular I would mention staff conditions of service matters which are increasing subject both to national negotiations with the employers and to government legislation (the Trade Unions and Labour Relations Act 1974 being of prime importance).

It is this last factor and its implications for the role of the college Secretary which has perhaps been given too little recognition. But the Secretary will find himself increasingly involved in the drafting of formal documents, in the operation of procedural machinery arising from these, and in the interpretation of various external agreements and legislation in the context of the college. On the one hand industrial relations matters will occupy him more as formal white collar Unionism develops, and on the other he will be involved in the hardening contractual relationship between the students and the college in such things as halls of residence, fees, Union accommodation, disciplinary procedures and appeals on academic grounds.

It is thus essential that he has direct access to informed legal advice on all aspects of college administration and this can only be achieved by an established working relationship with a qualified solicitor employed by the authority. Many colleagues have felt isolated in this respect and have in particular resented and have been embarrassed by delays in transmission of essential information to the college. To return to the parallel the Company Secretary will ensure that the best legal advice is available to his company. But he may have more freedom of choice as to where this advice comes from and in the larger company will either be qualified himself or have a legal adviser on his staff.

In the larger company the Secretary will be fully recognised as a senior member of the management team and will have directly responsible to him a wide range

of specialists covering the areas of Finance, Registry, Personnel, Public Relations and so on. His own personal involvement in formal, company secretarial duties will diminish as the company expands. We have seen similar developments in the larger colleges and this trend will continue with the new groupings of colleges now emerging.

The CAO will need to exercise the most careful judgement in determining when to propose that responsibility for a particular function should pass from the authority to the college or when to devolve responsibility within the college.

He himself will remain at the centre of a complex communications network, always cross-checking on the reliability of sources and the validity of data, exercising judgement as to whom to consult and when, and personally interpreting a variety of inputs at the many different levels within the system.

A M Davis,
Secretary and
Clerk to the
Governing Body,
Sheffield Polytechnic

THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER AND THE ACADEMIC BOARD

The invitation to present this subject contained a suggestion that the presentation should last for approximately forty minutes. After several years in the post of Chief Administrative Officer at Sheffield Polytechnic I have often thought I could write a book on the various problems and relationships of this period. Such a publication might not be a best seller but possibly a considerable amount of income could be generated in return for the omission of names and events!

It is interesting and encouraging that a Chief Administrative Officer should be involved in this study conference entitled 'Academic Boards'. So often the academic aspects of institutions of higher education are regarded as the exclusive prerogative of academic staff, thus tending to heighten the image of 'us' and 'them'.

The person responsible for the preparation of the brief obviously had his ear close to the ground in including a mention of the tensions experienced by the Chief Administrative Officer - the heading of one of the titles of my book - although there is perhaps an act of unreality in suggesting that the Chief Administrative Officer contributes to the work of the academic board as a member of the board. I shall elaborate on how the conflict caused by a duality of roles in fact influences the extent of the contribution.

I am conscious that many people in institutions other than polytechnics are involved in the administration of higher education and apologise for any suggestion I may make, quite unintentionally, that only the polytechnics have this type of experience.

the relevance of the polytechnic experience

Previous contributors to this conference have made reference to Administrative Memorandum 7/70 in which guidelines were established for the presentation and approval of Instruments and Articles of Government for Colleges of Further Education. Clearly my predecessors were able to suggest that the experience of polytechnics would assist colleges in making cases to the Department of Education and Science, taking full account of local opinion.

We are now perhaps able to look at the less formal situation and to see how, within the established legal framework, the actual processes of Government and Administration are carried on and once again hopefully the experience in polytechnics should be a factor of:

(i) Length of experience. Sheffield, for example, was designated a polytechnic on 1 January 1969.

(ii) The size of the institution. Sheffield, in 1973-4 had these somewhat frightening statistics:

483 Teaching staff posts
250 Part-time teaching staff
300 Full-time non-teaching staff salaried posts including 145 technicians
250 Hourly paid staff
20 Part-time non-teaching staff
2,600 Full-time students
1,860 Part-time day students
960 Evening students
2,500 Students on short courses
Revenue Estimates 1973/74, £4,487,830

In this context it is noteworthy that Administrative Memorandum 7/70 relates advanced work as a guide to the form of Instrument and Articles rather than numbers and suggests that the following areas are particularly relevant to the amount of advanced work undertaken:

Academic organisation
Appointment, promotion and dismissal of staff
Finance, premises and supplies

(iii) The current experience of polytechnics must also be a factor with specific reference to the review at present in progress of the possible integration of Colleges of Education under Administrative Memorandum 7/73.

(iv) The polytechnics are continually reviewing their own Instruments and Articles of Government. Sheffield, for example, in common with other similar institutions made arrangements for student representation on the academic board and governing body in 1970 and for non-teaching staff representation on the governing body in 1972. In addition, there was a specific proposal in 1972 to increase the size of the academic board considerably from its present membership of 47 (See Figure 1). The DES, in its wisdom, did not permit this expansion although it must be emphasised that there was a complicating factor in that the Sheffield Education Authority added a specific area of representation by amending the academic board and governing body proposals to include provision for three ATTI representatives elected by ATTI members in the polytechnic. Incidentally no single room was available to accommodate the enlarged Board! It is interesting in this context to note that in the early days of polytechnics the Department of Education and Science always required that all Heads of Department should be ex officio members of the academic board. This, in my opinion, has tended to give undue weight to the non-selected category of membership of the board.

The Chief Administrative Officer as Secretary of the Academic Board

Let us now turn and review the actual responsibilities of the Chief Administrative

FIGURE 1

SHEFFIELD POLYTECHNIC

ACADEMIC BOARD

Membership:

28	Ex-officio members comprising:	
	Principal	(Chairman)
	Deputy Principal	(Deputy Chairman)
	Secretary & Clerk to the Governing Body	(Secretary)
	22 Heads of Department	
	Members of the Academic Staff nominated as Governors	
	Former Principal of Sheffield College of Art as long as he remains in the full-time service of the Polytechnic	
10	Elected members comprising:	
	2 members of Teaching Staff elected by each Board of Studies	
7	Elected members comprising:	
	members of full-time Teaching Staff (2 from Art and Design and 5 from but not allocated to other Schools) elected by all members of the teaching staff	
2	Student members comprising:	
	President of the Student Union and one member nominated by SRC	
-	Co-opted members (at present) Up to 6 may be co-opted from within or outside the Polytechnic	
47		

April 1973

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Papers of HST President's
Secretary's File (PSF)

Officer related to the academic board taking account of two main areas:

(a) His work as Secretary and his professional contribution as a manager of staff and resources.
(b) His contribution as a member of the board.

(i) Responsibilities and areas of importance

briefing session

The responsibilities in this area can be broken down clearly. In the first place he is responsible for preparing the Chairman for each meeting. This will depend, as in all cases, on the type of Chairman with whom he is dealing. A predecessor mentioned a one and a half hour briefing session as a basic requirement for each academic board meeting. This is certainly not my experience although there is a detailed discussion of the Agenda, who is to prepare supporting papers etc.

agenda

The Chief Administrative Officer has a responsibility to keep the Agenda clear of minutiae and routine matters. This will of course be related to the type of committee structure which has been established under the academic board. (See Figure 2). This also emphasises the importance of the type of academic board which is established. Should it be a small executive academic board making decisions with 'discussive' committees at a lower level or is the choice to be a larger deliberating body with standing committees operating as executive committees?

It is difficult to automatically exclude any matter from the wide brief of the academic board contained in the Articles of Government (See Figure 3) and one has to work out devices to avoid cluttering the academic board Agenda with matters that can easily be dealt with at other administrative or committee levels, formally or informally.

Procedures introduced at Sheffield include summaries of standing committee minutes with the minutes themselves being attached to the academic board Agenda for information only, considerable use of School (Faculty) Administrative Assistants as links between the Administration and the Dean of Schools and termly meetings between the Heads of Department and the Secretary and Senior Administrative Staff to isolate and deal with administrative matters. May I also comment on the fact that it has been made clear that meetings of Heads of Departments either with the Secretary or with the Principal and similarly meeting of the Deans, not full-time appointments anyway, are not to be regarded as permanent links in the management structure. We have moved away from the principle of having one or possibly two members of administrative staff acting as committee secretaries. This work is now allocated to a wide range of professional administrative staff, relating their own work as far as possible to the work of the committee. This has certainly produced variety in the work for such staff and a positive commitment with staff development implications.

Returning to my original point all these factors tend to ensure that administrative matters and minor academic matters are not included in the already over-burdened Agendas of the academic board. (See Figure 4). To sum it up the

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SHEFFIELD POLYTECHNIC : COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

FIGURE 2

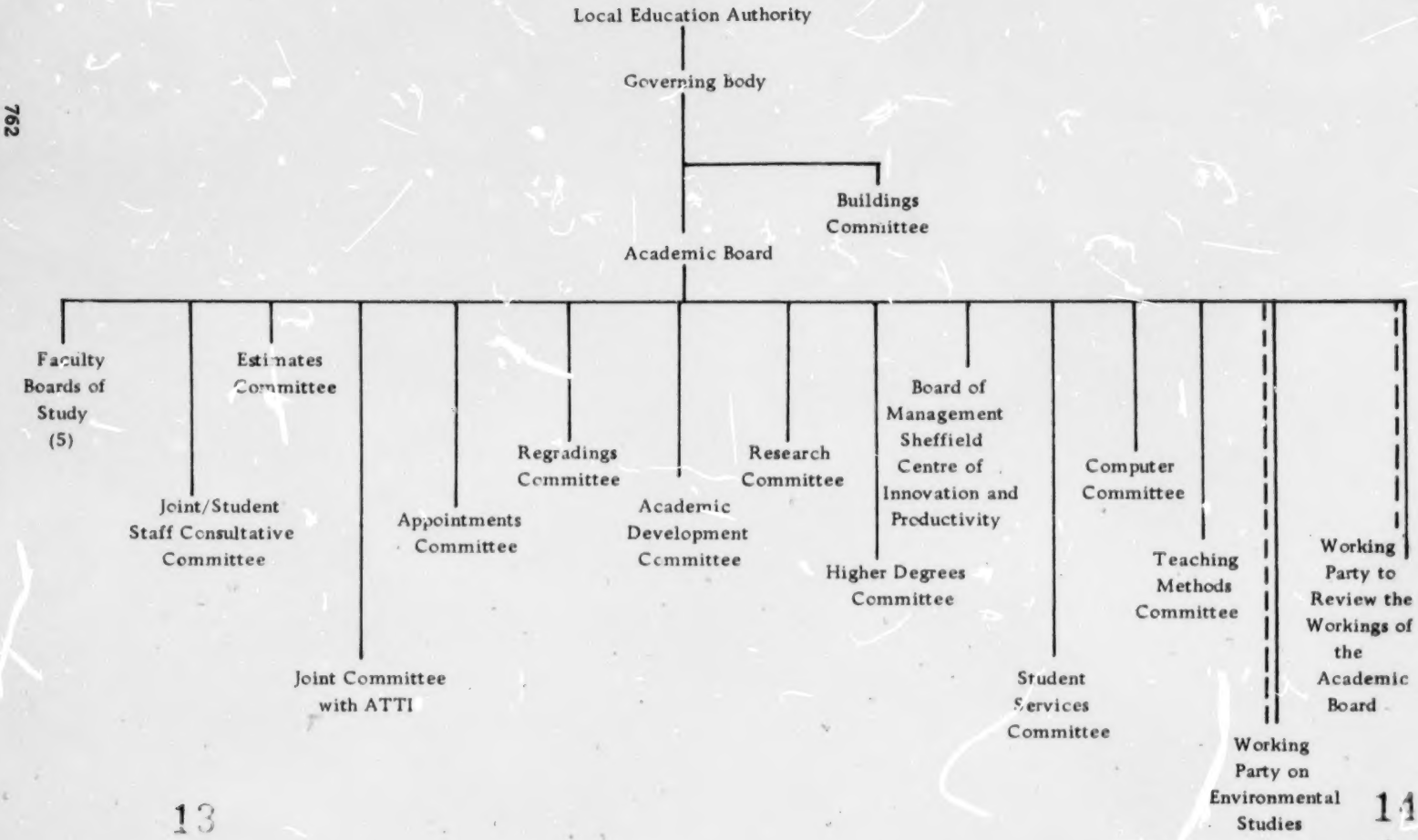

FIGURE 3 Articles of Government 9 (c) and 9 (d) - Sheffield Polytechnic

9 (c) The academic board, which shall meet at least three times in every academic year, shall be responsible to the Governors in accordance with the rules made from time to time by the Governors in consultation with the board for planning, co-ordination, development and oversight of all the academic work of the Polytechnic including the following functions:

(i) The regulation of the teaching of the Polytechnic.
(ii) The regulation of the admission of students to the Polytechnic.
(iii) The regulation of the examinations conducted by the Polytechnic.
(iv) The award of academic qualifications, fellowships, prizes and other distinctions, including honorary awards.
(v) The regulation of research and consultancy and the publication of papers relating thereto.
(vi) The making of reports to the Governors and other bodies on academic matters or on any matter which may be referred to them by the Governors.
(vii) The exercise of any other functions which may be delegated to them by the Governors.
(viii) The consideration of and recommendation on estimates for submission to the Governors.

(d) The academic board shall be required to make arrangements for the delegation to schools and departments as far as practicable of matters not directly affecting other schools or departments respectively or the Polytechnic as a whole.

FIGURE 4 Extracts from Index of Academic Board Minutes

Academic Development
Academic Structure and Organisation
Annual Review of Courses
Consultancy
Constitution of the Academic Board
Course and Examination Fees
Course and Session Dates
Designation of Major Courses
Development Plan
Disciplinary Procedures
Education Development Unit
External Examiners
Grading of Teaching Departments
James Report
New Course Proposals
Organisation of Student Services
Personal Tutorials
Readerships
Regional Management Centre
Residential Accommodation for Students
Revenue and Capital Expenditure
Staff Development
Staff Establishment
Staff Student Ratios
Titles of Polytechnic Awards
Tutorial Teaching Methods

importance of the academic board agenda will reflect the administrative machinery of the institution.

presentation of papers

I must emphasise here my view of the importance of the quality of the presentation of academic board papers. We place great stress on the total use of offset litho machines for all these papers. We have distinctive folders and we bear in mind always that a well produced academic board paper may, in its initial form, go forward not only to the governing body but possibly to the Local Authority or CNAA and other outside bodies.

There should be no need to emphasise my next point although it is often ignored with obvious results. This is to ensure that all the facts are included in any presentation where either a debate or often a decision will be required. Here again the link between the academic board and future steps in an administrative procedure must be stressed. An incomplete academic board paper on which a decision is taken will come under heavy fire at the governing body or the relevant Authority Committee meeting. Examples of the importance of this aspect are, for example, approving a revised fee for a course or an examination, requesting academic board comment on a CNAA proposal, approving the Development Plan.

action timetable

It is also important to keep a check on the pattern of action over a session. For example, there will be a certain time of the year when there is the annual review of courses, the preparation of estimates, the consideration of new degree and non-degree courses. Administrative staff should be aware of this timetable and work to it.

delegation

I would also like to emphasise the delegation of powers where possible within a committee structure. At Sheffield, for example, the Higher Degree Committee deals with approval of External Examiners and the Computer Committee has a great deal to do with the purchase of new computer equipment for a range of Departments. The authority of the Estimates Committee in this context needs no further comment.

One important area so often forgotten in administrative arrangements is the action to be taken on minutes of the academic board. Nothing is more disastrous than letters being written by three members of the management based on some academic board decisions. There must be one channel through which all action is either initiated or delegated.

quality of reporting

The quality of reporting is of course essential because it may be related to a chain of events. For example, the views of the Student Services Sub-Committee passed through the academic board on Students' Residential Accommodation will certainly involve the Council. The decisions on consultancy and conditions of service will certainly receive close attention from the staff through their union representation, a development plan will finally arrive on a desk in the Department of Education and Science and course proposals will receive the attention of the Regional Advisory Council, the Regional Staff Inspector, DES, professional bodies, etc.

relationship with Chairman

The relationship with the Chairman is a key factor in academic board work.

Again it will depend very much on the Chairman and of course the relationship will differ from that with the Chairman of the Board of Governors who will tend to rely more on the Clerk for information and procedures. The Chairman of the academic board usually has a firm grasp of all the academic factors related to each subject on the agenda and will normally require immediate reference to past minutes, academic board procedures, articles of government, etc. Much of course will also depend on your normal day-to-day relationships with the Chairman but whatever these factors may add up to, the Chief Administrative Officer must know the normal procedural rules and be ready to provide the references, or even a secret ballot on the rare occasions this is necessary.

(ii) Administrative support

The first point to make here is that the extent to which this is required is not really considered in Administrative Memorandum 7/70 although the Chief Administrative Officer's dual role as Secretary of the academic board and Clerk to the Governing Body is written into the Articles of Governme... I suppose you should add a third role as Head of the Administrative Services of the polytechnic.

Back-up support is essential. It is no good having a sound committee structure if information is not fed in properly or action taken at the right delegated level or the Principal and Chief Administrative Officer are not fully briefed. Incidentally we have found the most successful factor in this is to publicise the exact duties of all administrative staff at all levels as appropriate so that senior academic staff become accustomed to dealing direct with the staff who do the job and this, coupled with the regular production and circulation of specific management information details, does assist in briefing staff as a whole.

control of non-teaching establishment

It would be very surprising at this juncture if I did not refer to the considerable problem of expansion of the Non-Teaching Staff Establishment compared with the relatively straightforward task, within estimates, of adding to the Teaching Establishment. We are all aware of the problems of the annual submission to the Personnel Services Committee of the Council and the results which pertain. It is clear that in a rapid area of development the most practical form of Government in this area will be to permit polytechnics and possible Colleges of Further Education to control their own Non-Teaching Establishment within criteria agreed with the Authority - for example one would not offer a Technician four more increments to leave the City Engineers Department - and within estimates. A supplementary factor here is the problem of career structures for young Administrators entering Higher Education especially graduates. We must not forget that it is the middle management grades where not only training and staff development is important but where much of the professional work to which I have referred to earlier is undertaken.

universities

We are after all moving rapidly into a new area of development. In most polytechnics there will be one Administrator only, paid the salary which four or five colleagues at the University round the corner will receive. At Sheffield we have only recently introduced a full-time Deputy Principal and one Assistant Principal. The University pattern of courses is for the development of the

professional Career Administrator and in many of our polytechnics new stratas of Deputy and Assistant Principal level are being established to deal with what are administrative matters.

the expanding situation

In spite of my previous comments it seems clear to me that the whole aspect of the work of Chief Administrative Officers needs revision in an expanding situation and in this situation the work of the academic board is a vital factor. With the development of larger institutions embracing present Colleges of Education can he still retain a detailed control of the whole range of administrative matters? These include finance, central services, academic board, Clerk to the Governing Body, the registry. Various ways and means have already been exercised by polytechnics to deal with this situation. As I have already commented, in some polytechnics Deputies and Assistant Directors have been introduced, in others a clear distinction has been drawn either between academic board work and other responsibilities or between finance and other responsibilities in both cases resulting in two Senior Administrators having direct access to the Principal for their respective areas. Some colleagues would make a definite case for the separation of the Registrar's functions including the work of the academic board from the administrative load.

The Chief Administrative Officer as a Member of the Academic Board

It must be stated quite clearly that the Chief Administrative Officer's role on the academic board is minimal at present and there are considerable difficulties in him functioning as a member of the board.

In the first place he has always been regarded traditionally as an Administrator and thus this would be new and difficult ground to break. Secondly he will be responsible for seeing certain subjects through to the governing body where he will operate as the Clerk advising the Chairman. He should therefore really not express any view even a view that the subject or decision taken will not meet the approval of the governing body or the Authority! He may also have information which should not be disclosed at academic board level and he will probably know the views of the governing body and the Local Education Authority on certain aspects of policy. An interesting reflection on this is that technically at governing body level the Clerk could report the Principal to the Governors.

In this context one should not forget the influence that the Chief Administrative Officer or his staff can exercise by being members of various other committees. I serve as an elected member on the Student Staff Consultative Committee and members of the Administrative staff, apart from secretarial duties serve on many other committees for example, Teaching Methods, Student Services, Estimates etc.

This talk has mainly posed questions and related experience from a developing institution. The more one examines matters of policy in polytechnics the more

obvious it is that there are thirty polytechnics and thirty Local Authorities and thirty ways of operating.

Much will depend on personalities despite the legal framework and administrative structure but what is important is the way in which the Chief Administrative Officer and his staff carry out their duties and establish their contribution inside and outside the polytechnic since this will certainly affect the work of the academic board and the image of the Administration.

Dr H D Law,
Director,
Preston Polytechnic

THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND THE ACADEMIC BOARD

In presenting this talk on the Head of Department and the academic board, I am conscious of two major difficulties quite apart from those inherent in the subject matter. The first is a function of my own experience, since my knowledge of the topic has all been gained in polytechnic-like establishments. The second difficulty arises from the nature of this meeting at Coombe Lodge. Heads of Departments may not be all things to all men, but they are surely different things to different [illegible] It is not immediately apparent how one should speak on this subject to an audience containing Heads of Departments, academic staff both senior and junior to them and administrative staff.

On balance, - or, off balance some may think - I have decided to speak as though all my audience were Heads of Departments. So I want those who are not or have not been a Head of Department, to indulge in a sort of transvestism - always a useful exercise for those who wish to study whole organisations! They should try to assume the cloak of authority of the big, bad dictatorial Head of Department of the pre 7/70 era. Some of the reassurances I give about status, importance and influence may seem self-evident to people who have not been in this position and I am sure they will be unnecessary to future Heads of Departments. But those who hold this office during the transitional period are not likely to find them irrelevant.

Heads of Departments are as pebbles on the sea-shore. Rounded and polished, they lie about in the sand and absorb the heat. Immersed regularly and moved a little by the tide, they seem unchanged when the waters recede. They preserve the integrity of the beach and prevent the sand from shifting. Most of them are quite hard and it is generally painful to walk on them. No two of them are the same.

It may be argued that Heads of Departments are more dynamic. I agree. But they do contribute to the necessary stabilising inertia of the college system and it is well to remember this in these times of change. I think other parts of the analogy are also apt, particularly the last sentence. Heads of Departments <u>are</u> all different. I was deliberately provocative a few moments ago when I referred to the pre 7/70 Head of Department. Even in those days, some Heads of Departments behaved in the way I think appropriate now; today some

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NB - Dr Law gave this talk when he was Depute Director, Glasgow College of Technology

of them still behave as though 7/70 had not happened.

Perhaps I ought to mention the academic board at this point since it is in the title of the conference and of this talk. Really, what 7/70 is concerned with - and what we are discussing today - is participation and academic responsibility. The democratisation of the system affects everyone in it, not least the Head of Department.

Since the Head of Department still has undeniable executive power, he could probably fight a very successful rear-guard action against recent developments, especially if his Principal is unsympathetic towards them. I do not think one could recommend this as long term strategy - unless the Head of Department is nearing retirement! People in rearguards get hurt. The longer one stays in them, the more exposed one's position becomes and the more difficult to extricate oneself.

7/70 was no ordinary tide and, as a result of it, the Head of Department's role has suffered

> " ... a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange".

However, no need to ring his knell! I fancy we shall find that, like the King of Naples, though possibly more deserving, the Head of Department is far from drowned.

Shift in Nature of the HOD's Role

attitude change

Having said that there is a change in the Head of Department's role, it is curiously difficult to pin-point the differences. It is true that the Head of Department's powers of coercion and unilateral decision-taking (if he ever indulged them!) have been diluted, but he is still the departmental manager. If anything, it is a new attitude towards the Head of Department's job which is required.

Two quotations will serve to illustrate what I mean:-

> "The Headship of a polytechnic department is one of the hard-luck stories of higher education today. It is an uncomfortable role, caught usually between the dynamic, autocratic Director on one side and the wild young things on the other. It carries a disproportionate administrative load and provides the main management structure of the institution." [1]

> "I believe that in many polytechnics he (the Head of Department) is the most important single individual so far as the health of a given course or subject is concerned. Through him the decisions of the academic board are

translated into action and the beliefs and inclinations of staff and students are moulded into departmental policy." [2]

These descriptions of the situation are not as opposed as one might think, but whereas the first quotation stresses the difficulties, the second tries to express the challenge of the Head of Department's job.

The Head of Department is not reduced in stature because of his supposed new-found preoccupation with reconciling opposing forces. In this sense, all management is in the middle, even when it is not middle-management. Thus, the Director or Principal has to resolve conflicts between internal demands and external constraints; and the institution itself has to respond to social needs whilst preserving academic probity.

HOD's influence in collective decision making

Although the Head of Department has less formal authority than in the past, the dispersal of authority is not unique to our educational institutions. It is one of the facts of modern life with which Heads of Departments, like everyone else, must come to terms. The mistake is to equate loss of formal authority with loss of influence. One Head of Department is quoted as saying that he is:-

> "... trying to get the situation where I am simply acting as spokesman for the view agreed in the department."

This is all right provided it is only a question of accepting (shielding behind?) the collective decision, but if it is a negation of the Head of Department's role, I totally reject it.

At academic boards, boards of study, staff meetings, the Head of Department should be in there pitching, winning the committee to his point of view. More times than not, he should, by virtue of his experience and knowledge of the overall situation, be successful. At other times, perhaps other views will prevail and the Head of Department will have learned something. In theory, the best possible decisions will be made.

You may say, "In practice, a true consensus is rarely reached. Committees tend to be conservative, whereas the radical course of action is often the right one". Decisions by individuals are no less suspect. As Robert Ayres in his book Technological Forecasting and Long Range Planning - which is somewhat akin to what many of our committees are trying to do - points out -

> "If a certified forecasting genius is available, of course, there is nothing more to be said. If, however,

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[1] Michael Locke, "Cabals but no limelight for the heads", THES, 10.11.72

[2] H D Law, "Polytechnics - the State of the Game", Chemistry in Britain, 1971, 520

> either the genius or the certification is in question - which is normal - the modern tendency is to rely instead on an opinion poll or a panel of experts." [3]

Anyone who would apply for this certification deserves to be certified!

Fortunately for the Head of Department, experience and knowledge can generally make its mark in our enclaves. It is up to him to exhibit these qualities and to cultivate the attitudes of both staff and students towards the new style of democratic administration so that this type of authority can play its proper role. Personally, I am not so concerned that the Head of Department is likely to lose control of the situation as I am that, by endeavouring to preserve his control, he may fail to bring the new democratisation into proper effect.

Mr Christopher Price, during the second reading of the Education Bill said of committees:-

> "Such bodies are a pleasant charade that we have in Local Government - and I have spent much of my life serving on them - to give authority to decisions of individuals." [4]

One can interpret this to indicate something sinister or one can simply take it at face value which is to say that, whatever the system, the same people are likely to make the decisions. The latter may seem a cynical viewpoint. In many instances, since people vary in their powers of persuasion and in their level of information, it is probably not far wrong. What it does not stress, of course, is the tremendous advantage to be gained by associating everyone with the decision-making process.

I hope the other interpretation will not relate to many college situations. As I remarked earlier, Heads of Departments could try to frustrate the purposes of reorganisation, but I do not think it would be in the best interests of themselves or of the college. To explain why I think this is so, I shall need to examine the evolution of college organisation and of the department.

The Shifting Concept of the Department

Perhaps I should have dealt with semantics at the beginning. It was no accident that I did not and I am not going to attempt definitions even now. We can all recognise intuitively the sort of teaching resource management unit which constitutes a department, even though there are many generic variations, from course-

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[3] R U Ayres, Technological Forecasting and Long Range Planning, McGraw-Hill, 1969

[4] Christopher Price, Education Bill (Lords), 7. 2. 68, 587

based to subject-based, and from manpower-intensive to, almost, but not quite, capital-intensive. The term department is curiously elusive if we try to tie it down further. This is the type of department that I am referring to in this talk.

the 'undepartment'

I do not wish to confuse the picture by including the modern "undepartments" introduced by some colleges and polytechnics, although their units are not always so different from discipline-based departments. However, before passing over the "undepartments", it is instructive to consider why they have been created since the reasons for their inception also relate to the ways departments are changing.

Basically, I suppose the "undepartments" have been created to give greater flexibility to the teaching machine in anticipation of an increased demand for more complex courses, including interdisciplinary courses which can cut across several of the traditional types of departments. The management unit in these schemes might equate, for example, to "academic disciplines", in which case, course organisation is controlled by a larger group of units. To revert to our analogy, the crevices between the pebbles can then be explored. Ideally, another valuable feature of this arrangement is that staff of like-disciplines are all grouped together, an important asset in subject development at and beyond Honours degree level. One difficulty with such schemes, is to identify the "academic disciplines". As graduates from the new inter-disciplinary courses come forward, in which "academic disciplines" will they be employed?

One problem with all these new systems is one of incentive. One has to ensure that the initiative for developing new courses is not too diffuse. In the case of "academic discipline" based units, the difficulty could perhaps be solved if each of the units was headed by a Burnham-like Head of Department, but at present, that is not realistic.

traditional department

Reverting to "our" type of department, the Burnham payment scale for Heads of Departments, though unsatisfactory in many ways, does reward incentive. Heads of Departments are positively encouraged to foster new courses, meeting and often anticipating social demands. The result is summed up nicely by one of Mr Tolley's definitions:-

> "A department is an empire in which the concrete never sets." [5]

One may feel free to doubt whether this arrangement encourages Heads of Department to deal equally seriously with interdepartmental courses ("servicing" has long had a stigma about it - so much so that I think it is advisable to try to avoid using the word) or to think of the development of the college as a whole.

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[5] Rev G Tolley, "The Managerial Role of the Head of Department", The Technical Journal, 1972, 12

federalism

College organisation based on departments is really a form of federalism. I cannot resist quoting McWhinney, it sounds so much like the college situation, although, of course, he is speaking of a bigger stage. He says one shouldn't equate

> " ... federalism with laissez-faire and the partisan fortunes of political and economic interest groups, "

and thus consign ...

> "federalism to the limbo when those same special interest groups, inevitably, falter and are broken with the passing of time. " [6]

Federalism has been condemned on these grounds by many political theorists and yet federal government abounds and appears to be one of the most stable types of government. It depends, however, on two factors which are present to varying extents in different federal systems.

(1) a sympathy or awareness (comity) between the federated units

(2) an authoritative central agency

In the context of the modern college, both factors are important.

I come back to my comment at the beginning. The main change in the Head of Department's job is one of attitude.

The Intangible Head of Department

The tangible duties of the Head of Department are virtually unchanged - I will deal with these shortly - but the intangible responsibilities of the Head of Department, through which the Head of Department influences the ethos of the whole college, have suddenly sprung into prominence. Unless he fulfils these intangible responsibilities, I believe our revised academic organisation will be little more than a facade and the purpose of the reorganisation will be defeated.

The intangible duties are both departmental and interdepartmental in character. Under this heading, I include the personal responsibility which each Head of Department must bear for the esprit-de-corps of staff and students. Clearly, this is something which the Head must have in mind at all times since every action he takes will influence it in some way. I include the Head of Department's commitment to and involvement in the work of the various committees, working parties, discussion groups and so on of the college. There is no need for me to repeat how important I rate this work. Finally, and more contentiously, perhaps, I include the Head of Department's responsibility as a subject leader.

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[6] E McWhinney, Comparative Federalism, Univ. Toronto Press, 2nd Edition, 1965, 5

The traditional Head of Department who immersed himself entirely in the tangible, almost as though timetables, room allocations, ordering chalk etc, exempted him from teaching, talking to staff, or perhaps even thinking about his subject, is mythical. Looking at the hierarchy of any organisation one sees that specific knowledge becomes less relevant the nearer one gets to the top. The Head of Department post is really middle-management: it requires both broad and specific knowledge. Above this point, specific subject knowledge may help, but it is not essential. At the Head of Department level, I believe it to be critical.

Members of staff may rail about the Principal or Director "Oh, he's a chemist!" - this from a social scientist - or "Oh, he's an economist!" - from an engineer - as though that explained everything. But they expect to have a rapport with their HOD on common professional grounds. The Director or Principal also relies on the Head of Department's subject knowledge. And how can a Head of Department assess curricula, staff development, students' progress, or even the appropriateness of his department's contribution to the work of the college, without it?

You see why I call these responsibilities intangible! No-one will be able to measure them directly. Burnham will take no account of them. But the intangible Head of Department is a key figure in modern college organisation for fostering an effective federal college policy and for ensuring comity between the management units of the college.

The Tangible Head of Department

ACFHE/APTI Report

Now, what about the tangible responsibilities of the Head of Department? I mentioned that they are virtually unchanged. The ACFHE/APTI Working Party Report on Staff Development in further education noted 13 specific responsibilities for the Head of Department, one of them divided into 18 parts.[7] I do not propose to go item by item through this very useful check-list saying how each task might be handled. However, I do want to make some general comments about the tangible responsibilities, because I think the intangible burdens being put on a Head of Department must affect the way he tackles them.

delegation

If he is to be effective, the Head of Department must delegate his tangible duties and, undoubtedly the most important factor in looking after these items is the way he organises his department. He must seek the right structure with the right person in the right place doing the right job. There is no question of unfairness in this concept. The Head of Department is spreading his authority; one must expect him also to distribute his responsibilities. If he has the right people in the right place, they are glad to accept them. It is valuable experience for the staff concerned and they have a right to expect delegation as part of their own career development.

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7 "Staff Development in Further Education". Report by ACFHE/APTI Working Party, 1973

structuring the department

Of course, there are many ways of organising a department. In my own department - when it was concerned with chemistry and biology - we had a rather traditional structure. There was an Assistant Head of Department, who, apart from advising and acting for the Head of Department in his absence, had charge of the general day-to-day administration; a principal lecturer in charge of each main branch of chemistry which concerned us (inorganic, organic, physical and radio and radiation chemistry). The principal lecturers were responsible to the Assistant Head of Department for the day-to-day administration as it affected their subjects and were responsible, as subject leaders, to the Head of Department in matters like syllabus interpretation and development. As biology grew in importance, we introduced a principal lecturer in charge of biology and this evolved to an Assistant Head of Department in biology with principal lecturers in charge of the main subject areas (animal biology and plant biology). Eventually, biology separated as a discrete department with a similar structure to the chemistry department. The Departments of Chemistry and Biology thus came under the umbrella of the faculty structure.

In my present college, the head of the Social Science Department has organised his staff into similar units (sociology, economics, politics and psychology). I believe departments in any subject area can be treated similarly. It is also possible to dispense with the post of Assistant Head, distributing the day-to-day duties amongst the senior staff, one of whom is designated Deputy Head to act on behalf of the Head of Department when necessary.

Really these arrangements are not so different to some of the "undepartments" which I mentioned. Thames Polytechnic for example has subject divisions, each headed by a principal lecturer, grouped into Schools. I think this recognition of the fundamental integrity of "academic disciplines" is essential for the development of Honours level teaching, but one should realise that the "academic disciplines" may not be the traditional ones. It can also be effective with less advanced work, but here the academic content, since it is not so exacting, may not be the most appropriate denominator for the division.

staff

Regardless of the ideal, many factors determined the right departmental structure for any given point in time. Not least of them, is the staff available. It is almost unknown, I think, for a Head of Department to have been instrumental in appointing all his staff. A large proportion is usually inherited. Getting the structure right is fundamental, but it would be unusual to find that all of the staff required for an ideal structure are already in the post, just waiting for the word. A word of caution! It is better to work towards the right structure gradually than to do it by edict.

Most people make the right noises when asked what they mean by delegation. This is so vital to my whole concept of departmental organisation that I must say a word about. When I delegate, I do just that. I try to establish the parameters within which the man has discretion and then I leave him to get on with it. In general, I want to be kept informed of what is going on and, by trial and error, we work out what sort of feed-back is necessary. Each member of staff should know just what is required of him. Don't we all work much better without someone looking over our shoulders?

There is no profound new truth here, but surprisingly, some Heads find it difficult to apply. The need for proper delegation extends right through the organisation. Senior staff in the department will in turn delegate to other staff and the same rule applies, but I think sub-contracting of this type should be discussed with the Head of Department before it is raised with the member of staff. By maximum delegation throughout the organisation, the initiative, energy and expertise of each member of staff is harnessed to the machine. I feel that the result is likely to be much more satisfactory than if the dynamo is at the centre, no matter how high its rating.

tasks the HOD should retain

There are certain matters which the Head should not delegate. Of course, he will discuss these matters with members of staff and maybe have teams - a more directional concept than committees - working on them, but he will want to stay at the centre himself. What sort of things are these? I reduce them to five:-

(1) Staffing (appointment/development/organisation).
(2) Academic programme (overall, as opposed to detail).
(3) Financial estimates, including establishment.
(4) General external relations (ie outside the department. All members of staff obviously involved, but Head of Department plays special role).
(5) Research - where applicable (and I don't mean that the Head of Department does it all!)

Decision-Making

To summarise, I think the Head of Department stands to a department as the Director or Principal does to the college; furthermore, the Head of Department's relationship to the Director or Principal is rather like the relationship of staff to the Head of Department. Both the Director or Principal and the Head of Department are concerned with management, organisation and discipline and, if they are wise, both of them will fulfil these functions by the maximum involvement of staff at all stages. This does not absolve them from taking decisions, but it does ensure that the decisions they take will be based on full information and with a realistic appreciation of possible consequences. I am sure we all appreciate that, having made a decision, the administrator should stick by it. Sometimes, it is very tempting to change one's mind. To confuse things further, occasionally it is as well to do so. Actually, if the system is functioning properly, most of the decisions have a way of looking after themselves.

You will notice that I have avoided the word "conflict" throughout this talk. It figures prominently in many discussions about the effect of democratisation on managers. What if a Head of Department is in conflict with his staff committee? What if he is in conflict with the academic board? They say the Head of Department still has to carry the can although he is not allowed to carry his own cup! Well, what if the Head of Department should disagree with the consensus? He has had an opportunity to voice his opinions. To work this system, I think we all have to agree to abide by the consensus. If there is no consensus,

I think the Head of Department should make the decision, trying to take all shades of opinion into account. To my mind, vote-counting is not a satisfactory procedure to adopt if it can be avoided.

C M Turner,
Staff Tutor,
Ccombe Lodge

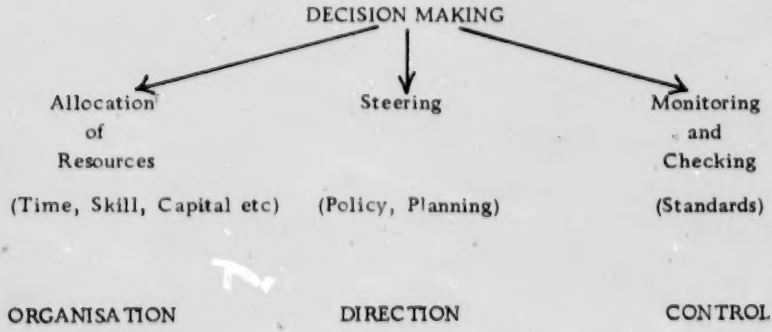
DECISION-MAKING IN ACADEMIC GOVERNMENT

I would like to divide this presentation into three sections. The first of these looks at the governing body and academic board as decision-making bodies; the second at the functions of the governing body; and the third at some of the problems that have arisen in operating academic boards.

Decision-making

Decisions can be placed in one of three categories. One set of decisions is concerned with the ways in which resources of the college are obtained and allocated. Decisions in this field are often ones of deciding priorities between one resource and another, or allocating one resource between two or more competitors. A second type of decision is concerned with monitoring or checking on standards of performance. All management must decide whether what is being done is what they want done, and if not take some action to bring what they want about. A third set of decisions is concerned with the policy of the college. Decisions which steer the college in one direction rather than another, and determine long and short term objectives, would fall in this area. These are fundamental decisions and are often preceded by much debate. The point to make is that no man or committee will be equally adept at making decisions in all three areas. They will be stronger in one area, weaker in others, so academic boards and governing bodies should look to see where their own strengths and weaknesses are.

FIGURE 1



Committees develop dominant, though not exclusive, styles and they will tend to approximate towards one of the following three forms.

1 Consensus Style. The aim here is to avoid conflict and to seek a middle way which will get everyone's support. Therefore one avoids controversial suggestions, tries to keep quiet the trouble-makers, avoids taking issues to a vote if at all possible. Such a style will keep the committee together as a harmonious body committed to the policies it produces, but it is likely to seek a satisfying rather than the optimal solution; it may be appropriate when the need is for radical or risk-taking solutions, and it may be frustrating to minority interests with a strong point of view. It also is likely to give considerable power to the Chairman.

2 Conflict Style. This assumes the British parliamentary approach that people represent different interests and points of view, who confront each other under formal rules of discussion and procedure and thrash out a solution, if necessary by a majority vote. There is a tendency in such situations for members to see themselves as mandated representatives of sectional interests. While such a style can lead to effective decision-making, there is a danger that the most politically adept or persuasive will always win the day, that pre-meeting negotiations and coalitions become a major college activity, and that in meetings views become more polarised rather than moving towards each other.

3 Rational Choice Style. This style, though time-consuming, has a lot of advantages and could well be used for all important complex decisions. It assumes that there are at least three separate processes in decision-making.

(i) The first can be called Recognition, and simply consists in recognising that there is a problem to be dealt with. Some managers pick up pending problems at a very early stage: others only respond when things are at crisis point. This mostly arises from the different degrees of effectiveness of signalling systems which warn that something is amiss.

(ii) The second stage, called Action and Decision Alternatives, is the one most easily skimped. Once the problem is recognised then it is necessary to search around for all possible solutions and lay them on the table. This search requires a fair degree of creative and imaginative thinking, for the more alternatives available, the greater the possibility of selecting the best, rather than an adequate answer.

(iii) The third stage, that of Choice of Alternatives, requires the selection of the best answer. This stage requires judgement, wisdom, experience and perception, so that after an appropriate weighing of costs and benefits the best alternative can be chosen.

Once again, we can assume that no one man is equally good at each process. He may be better at thinking up Alternatives than picking the best one, or spotting a problem early than thinking up any solutions. So at least for the first two processes a team is likely to be much better than an individual,

though there is still some debate as to whether a team is any better for the final stage of judgement.

FIGURE 2 STAGES OF DECISION MAKING

I	RECOGNITION	-	having signal systems which make one aware that a problem exists
II	ACTION AND DECISION ALTERNATIVES	-	search for all possible solutions however unlikely
III	CHOICE OF ALTERNATIVES	-	judgement of which one is best

Although the subject of the decision obviously influences the style of decision-making, and although no committee works exclusively and purely within one style, nevertheless I would argue that governing bodies and academic boards develop over time typical styles which overlay such differences.

Problems of Governing Bodies in Relation to their Functions

Governing bodies have the following peculiarity. There is nothing they now do which could not be done and generally was not done in the past by an alternative agency: the Education Committee, the Principal, or the Education Office. In the strictest sense, they are superfluous bodies, and not surprisingly have had some difficulties since 7/70 in defining their functions. The most obvious functions that seem to have emerged since then are the following.

(i) The governing body must attempt to preserve or develop a clear identity of the college - what it is and what it is for. This was easy 15 years ago, but becomes more difficult year by year. The increase of non-vocational to vocational work, full-time students in relation to part-time, the overlap with Sixth Forms, the aspirations for polytechnic status, the involvement with local community activities, - all judge the identity of the college. The governors need to control and make conscious decisions about the alternative identities open to the college.

(ii) The governing body is now a court of appeal not only for formal grievance procedures involving students and staff, but also as an arbitrator on policy disputes between academic board, the students union, the staff in total, the management and executive. This is an unpopular role to have, and not all governors may be happy in it.

(iii) The governing body represents the interests of the college to the outside world, both in facilitating good relations with employers and the community at large but also protecting the college from pressure

groups and campaigns. The danger here is that association between employers and the college may lead to the apparent undue influence of the former on the latter as apparently happened for example at Warwick University.

(iv) The governing body is the watchdog of the public, overseeing the housekeeping of the college, reviewing its estimates and expenditure, and checking that the college is providing a reasonable service. In times of financial cutback this becomes a crucial function, involving harsh decisions on priorities, and it has to be done against a backcloth of increasingly complex and sophisticated local authority planning and control.

III Some Problems in the Operating of Academic Boards

There has been some sense of disillusion in the colleges with the participative process after the heady enthusiasm when Circular 7/70 was first published. Some of this disillusionment can be attributed to following circumstances.

(i) There may well have been some misunderstanding as to what participation involved. Somewhat naively, many people originally hoped that an academic board would bring to the college an Athenian democratic system in which everyone would have a say in how it was run. Clearly this was, in fact, never intended and would have been impossible to put into practice. By its nature the academic board is a small group of people in relation to the total staff who take decisions on behalf of the rest of the college. This group has a heavy weighting of people in the higher hierarchic positions, and many college staff have to learn that the existence of an academic board gives them no more power than they had previously. In fact the board may be more autocratic than a College Principal who in the part used informal means to gather information and advice and was open to persuasion by any individual member. An oligarchy is not necessarily more democratic than a dictatorship.

(ii) Furthermore there may have been misunderstanding about the nature of involvement in decision-making. It is easily assumed that this mostly commonly means initiating, carrying through, and seeing implemented a decision. But there are at least three other kinds of involvement:- being consulting, having to approve, and having to be informed, and in everybody's situation, he will be involved in any of the four ways at different times depending upon the decision at hand. All are important types of contribution that influence the decision. It is possible for a college to construct a decision-making matrix which on one axis shows the decision points to be made, on the other the potential decision makers, and within the cells the type of involvement.

FIGURE 3 SIMPLIFIED DECISION-MAKING GRID

	Governing Body	Academic Board	Principal	Vice Principal	HOD etc
Selection of Junior Staff					
Establishment of new courses					
etc					

The grid may be filled in with letters Z, C, A and I according to the following key:

Z = Initiating and carrying through
C = Consulted
A = Approves
I = Informed

(iii) The introduction of an academic board structure causes the actual loci of power to become much more diffused. The larger the college and therefore the more elaborate its committee structure, the more difficult it is to see exactly where decisions are being made. It often appears to the staff that power is being wielded somewhere down the system in the misty area of committees, sub-committees and working parties. A confusing situation can easily develop in which there seems to be a different place for almost every kind of decision to be taken.

(iv) The danger in this situation is that the wielding of power becomes less responsible to any institutional check. It can also become concentrated in unintended places. Once a series of committees are established, then a number of people can use the committee grid to increase their influence. Either an individual or a clique can acquire strategic positions on a number of committees and thus combine in themselves collated information from several sources that is not available to most other members in the college. As many people dislike and avoid committee work, the keen committee man can often assume several key positions in the college, and particularly if he can control agendas and minutes he can become a very powerful man behind the scenes.

(v) The common assumption that everyone wants to be fully involved in the running of the college is however clearly false. Any

individual can feel himself to be anywhere along a continuum stretching from at one end a state of severe deprivation in participation through a centre point of satisfaction to another extreme of overload. Wherever people place themselves along this continuum, it quite likely bears not much correlation with what their actual level of participation is. Some people will feel overloaded even though they do very little, and others will feel deprived even though they work hard on numerous committees. It is therefore useful for a college to determine not only the extent of participation, but individuals' perceptions of this in relation to themselves and others.

(vi) The final point I would like to make is that participative government requires the learning of skills by college members. They need to be able to operate fluently and perceptively in the group processes of committees. Otherwise some members will be able to exert much more influence than others. The easier task is to familiarise all those involved with the conventions of committee work and the rules of debate, by induction courses, handbooks, workshops or the like. The harder task is to train individuals in the skills of group dynamics and interpersonal relationships, and it might be useful for academic boards and governing bodies to take an occasional stock-check of how they operate in this dimension, as a group and as individuals. Such courses as for example those provided by ERGOM might be useful to improve the facility with which people participate in the enterprise of academic government.

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ACADEMIC GOVERNMENT - SOME LESSONS FROM FRANCE

problems of participation

Academic Government is about who decides what, ultimately at the level of the institution. In English institutions over the past few years there have been some shifts in that perspective, particularly in higher and further education but now reaching the schools. The main problem areas are: the political and social impetus given by an apparent push towards 'participation' with the consequent politicisation of decision-making in educational establishments and the concept of academic freedom stemming from Robbins'(1963) argument that all educational institutions should be run like universities. The devolution down of decision-making has led to emotive definitions of words like consultation, participation and negotiation. Consultation is at the discretion of the Head. Negotiation enables a decision to be arrived at from set positions by interested parties. Participation should imply a group decision to which the participants are committed without the use of unilateral veto. Equally emotive are the words 'accountability' and 'responsibility'; can a committee be responsible and/or accountable? Specific problems include the conflict between the role of an academic board type committee and a governing or managing body; the proliferation of committees stemming from one main committee; the problem of who makes policy and who implements it? The division between academic, administrative and financial decisions; the supportive role of an administration which needs now to serve the committee structure. Clearly too the advent of participation has its impact on roles; the principal or head facing the need to deal with conflict which may be open within the committee form; equally heads of departments may be out-manoeuvred by subordinates wearing committee rather than departmental hats. All in all, participation brings about the need for organisational sensitivity towards the shifts between authority and power. Authority may be defined as the hierarchical capacity to command someone to do something; power is the ability to get things done.

French situation

To put some of these problems into perspective, it is useful to examine how similar or different they are within the constraints of a different educational system, eg, the French. Despite the total differences between the French and English educational systems all the questions just posed seem as significant to the French as they do to us.* An obvious manifestation of the French situation

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*The writer and A S Gover have just completed a detailed study of 'Academic Government in France', published in 'College Management' Vol 3, (F E Staff College, 1974)

is that quite clearly committee-based reforms in decision-making can be seen as a reaction to and containment of conflict which was student led in 1968. This throws into clearer perspective the English reaction, which was one of anticipation rather than reaction to conflict. The French example points to the fact that in both systems efficiency and effectiveness are only an after-thought to the need to contain conflict and are sought after you have an organisational package which you have to live with, like it or not. Within the package (the participative process), clearly, there are advantages: improved communication, the bringing in of expertise from lower down the institution structure or from outside it; consensus and commitment. All these are written into the French Guidance Act of 1968.

'gestion' and management

Without going into detail the major significant difference between the English and the French is that the former start from a deconcentrated decentralised position with participation within institutions added to the brew, together with the paradox of the call for more centralised resource decisions stemming from concepts like planned programme budgeting systems, out-put measurement, 'Bains' etc. The French start from a highly centralised Cartesian position trying to devolve somewhat towards the English mode but faced with the colossal inertia of their system. At the moment the key difference between the two is summed up in the words 'gestion' and 'management'. 'Gestion' is the harmonious putting into practice of decisions made elsewhere - making the system work. Management concerns itself with real resource decisions. In English educational institutions at all levels one could argue that management leaders do make real resource decisions but in France, academic leaders at institutional level are involved in the 'gestion' process only. Below the higher education level in France the debate is not about the devolution of power within institutions as it is in England, but giving these institutions - the head or anybody - any decision-making facilities at all, over say, curriculum matters, teaching method, staff selection etc. The issues of negotiation, consultation and participation are between the boundary of the institution and the outside, not within it, whereas in England our concern is with internal shifts in decision-making. Even above the school level the IUTs *, the nearest equivalent to our polytechnics, are tightly controlled though more expensive institutions than the Universities (given their staff/student ratios) and technician based, kept free from the taint of University rebelliousness where the Universities act only as a handling agent for their finances. Participation and negotiation tends to be at National committee level where decisions are taken, rather than at regional or local level where they are implemented. For example, it takes the lobbying of the Association of Headmasters in France to bring about limited pilot schemes in curriculum innovation within a single school. The Universities may select their own staff but they come from a nationally approved pool. Below higher education level staff are not appointed by the head of the establishment at which they will teach but by local and regional representatives of the central machinery.

From the English point of view there is an interesting lesson to be learnt in that at University and higher education levels, autonomy and participation are seen as intertwined within the concept of academic freedom. You can't have one without the other. In short, in France, from the resources/managerial viewpoint the system functions quite adequately without the need for an accountable head

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of an institution. 'Accountable' tends to become a meaningless word. Either an institution does not have participation or autonomy, resources decisions being taken by representatives of the central authority at regional or local level or it has autonomy and participation and participation includes an elected leader who is a chairman: in the case of Universities, a president for five years, in the case of the IUTs a director for three years. Where there is no autonomy then although the post of headmaster is appointed it is still a post and not a grade - the headmaster can return to the ranks of the teaching profession which remains the key to his salary position.

So in higher education the head of establishment is a chairman figure and below higher education level he is what the French call an 'animateur'. In other words he sees that decisions made elsewhere are implemented. Even in Universities, where there is some degree of autonomy, ratios for staffing, equipment and finance of the institution as a whole are decided centrally - there is only a nominal transfer of a limited running budget to be divided between different faculties and departments in the institution. In the IUTs the director is not a member of the main guiding committee he has merely a consultative voice. Heads of departments in the IUTs are themselves elected for three years. There are no heads of department: in the schools (which embrace the type of work done in English technical colleges).

IUT guiding committee

The concept of an academic board and of a governing body are integrated; the guiding committee has representatives both from the institution (staff and students) and from outside (industrialists, trade unionists etc.) In England the governing body may be seen as a reserve body to step in when things go wrong. In France it is an individual usually the 'Recteur', the regional educational chief.

The structure of the guiding committee of the IUT is as follows: The director is not a member of the committee. He may assist its deliberations with a consultative role in the same way as the heads of departments and the heads of the administrative services. The administration committee controls, in a general way, all questions concerning the organisation and functioning of the institute, notably when the director and heads of department give their annual reports. It establishes the internal rules of the institute, it decides on the designation of the director chosen compulsorily from among the teaching personnel having at least the rank of Maitre de Conference (roughly equivalent to senior lecturer). It designs the appeal mechanisms conforming to the "Guidance Act" relating to the disposition of teaching posts as well as the promotion, selection and suspension of teachers. It approves the 'Budget de functionnement', the operating budget of the institution which covers all routine items of expenditure but no capital expenditure or teaching salaries, and approves the financial balance sheet prepared by the finance officer and approved by the university financial overlord. It gives its opinion on the allocation of equipment and conditions of service. It co-ordinates the teaching methods of the institution, the assessment, areas of knowledge and aptitudes of the students. It decides on the opening or closing of departments in the institution and the dropping of optional subjects as well as the specific vocational guidance given to students in existing departments. It studies the problems of long and short term developments, it keeps itself informed on social reality involving staff and students,

bearing in mind that all the curriculum is determined by central government or by a committee structure at the centre as is finance.

school committee

Committee responsibilities in schools are as follows: The composition of the governing body/committee structure/academic board (just one committee) has representation from the administration, ie the headmaster etc, elected staff members, user representatives, ie children and parents and outside persons who are concerned with the running of the establishment. The Council has three main areas of responsibility. First, the exercise of executive measures relative to internal regulations, pupil recruitment, safety measures, physical improvements, management of assets and utilisation (up to 10%) of the establishment's reserve funds. Secondly it is concerned with the formulation of proposals concerning any alterations to the budget, the establishment's equipment, the introduction or abolition of posts, and school transport. Thirdly it is responsible for giving advice on modifications to be made to the physical conditions of school life or to teaching arrangements, on any judicial action to be taken, and on all questions referred to it by the school management or the standing committee. The 10% of the budget for which the committee is responsible is in fact the equivalent of only approximately 1% of the total budget of the school when one includes what the Ministry spend on staff salaries and buildings etc. and is therefore a very small amount, so the committee has only a token participation in resource allocation.

headmaster's role

Turning to the role of the headmaster, his management tasks are:

(1) The non-pedagogic assessment and development of tenured staff involving the visiting of classrooms, assessing their abilities for promotion and writing references (assessment criteria conform to a national standard).
(2) The particular development of auxiliary staff who might walk straight in from the street to begin teaching.
(3) The assessment and placement of pupils.
(4) The organisation of the school - although this seems less a major organisational process than, for example, the capacity to split classes into two if they get to more than a certain size in order to have a better staffing ratio the following year.
(5) As far as curriculum control is concerned, the head may adjust the timetable to ensure that the subjects he regards as most important are taught at a time when the pupils are likely to be at their most receptive.

student participation

As an aside it may be important to point out that although our perspective of French students may be one of trouble and turmoil and one frequently reads of all students above the age of 13 being on strike very often for a variety of package reasons, nevertheless at all levels, French institutions see students within the participative machinery making a positive and useful contribution rather than a negative and destructive one.

In conclusion however unhappy English headmasters might feel at losing 'accountability' if gross national product is in anyway linked with educational effectiveness then the French economic growth rate indicates a system - without institutional accountability as we know it which is three times as effective as ours.

The Further Education Staff College was established on 15th November, 1960, with the principal objective of improving the efficiency of further education establishments. Since 1963 the college has been organising study conferences at which senior personnel in education, industry and government are given the opportunity of discussing and analysing developments in further education, and of making recommendations for action and enquiry.

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